

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

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SUBJECT: FISHERIES: GOI DROPS CLAIM TO 50-MILE EXCLUSIVE ZONE

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D) 77 DUBLIN 2858

1. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 22 GOI MINISTER FOR FISHERIES
BRIAN LENIHAN, FLANKED BY JOEY MURRIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE
AGGRESSIVE IRISH FISHERMEN'S ORGANISATION (IFO), AND EAMONN
GALLAGHER, DIRECTOR-GENERAL EC FISHERIES DIVISION, ANNOUNCED THAT
IN HIS VIEW IT WAS "NOT A REALISTIC PROPOSITION AT THE PRESENT TIME"
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TO PRESS THE POLICY OF A 50 MILE EXCLUSIVE FISHING LIMIT. THE
MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION THAT SUBSTANTIAL ADVANTAGES
CAN BE SECURED FOR IRELAND THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF A SCHEME OF
FISHING PLANS OPERATING ON AN INTERIM BASIS FOR THE YEAR 1978 AND
DESIGNED TO OFFER A SPECIAL PREFERENCE FOR IRISH FISHERMEN UP TO 200
MILES FROM THE COAST. LENIHAN INDICATED THAT THESE PLANS WOULD BE
NEGOTIATED AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY BETWEEN IRELAND AND COMMUNITY

PARTNERS IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSION AND WOULD INVOLVE A REDUCTION IN FISHING EFFORT ON THE PART OF OTHER MEMBER STATES IN IRISH WATERS.

2. A WORKING GROUP IS TO BE SET UP WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES WHICH WILL INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IFO AND THE IRISH FISH PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATION (IFPO), TO COORDINATE POLICY IN RELATION TO THESE FISHING PLANS AND TO OVERSEE THEIR OPERATION. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO LENIHAN, THE COMMISSION WILL ASSIST THE GOI IN FUNDING AND CONDUCTING A SCIENTIFIC AND ECONOMIC STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IRISH FISHING INDUSTRY. LENIHAN ADDED THAT AS PART OF THE PACKAGE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ACQUIRE FIVE SPOTTER PLANES AND FIVE SEA PATROL CRAFT AT A TOTAL COST OF 40 MILLION POUNDS, 75 PERCENT OF WHICH WOULD BE FINANCED BY THE EC, TO IMPROVE FISHERY PROTECTION (SEE SEPTTEL).

3. AS RECENTLY AS A FEBRUARY 17 FISHERIES SEMINAR IN DONEGAL LENIHAN WAS STILL PAYING PUBLIC LIP SERVICE TO THE NOTION OF AN EXCLUSIVE COASTAL BAND FOR IRISH FISHERMEN, NOT WITHSTANDING THE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT TACK TAKEN IN JANUARY'S EC DISCUSSIONS (REFS. B AND C). THE DRAMATIC TURNABOUT ON THIS QUESTION BY OUTSPOKEN IFO CHAIRMAN MURRIN, WHO HAD PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN PRESSURING THE GOI TO HOLD OUT FOR AN EXCLUSIVE 50 MILE ZONE, SEEMS DUE TO SEVERAL FACTORS. PROBABLY AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT WERE: A) THE NOT UNEXPECTED FEBRUARY 16 RULING OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE THAT LAST YEAR'S UNILATERAL BAN ON LARGE TRAWLERS FISHING UNCLASSIFIED

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IN IRISH WATERS WAS DISCRIMINATORY AND IN VIOLATION OF THE TREATY OF ROME; B) THE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT RESISTANCE TO THE EXCLUSIVE ZONE CONCEPT BY THE COMMISSION AND BY ALL IRELAND'S EC PARTNERS EXCEPT THE UK, AN ATTITUDE EXEMPLIFIED BY THE TOUGH STAND TAKEN BY EC COMMISSIONER FINN GUNDELACH AT THE SOMETIMES STORMY FEBRUARY 17 DONEGAL SEMINAR; C) THE REALIZATION THAT CONTINUED INSISTENCE BY THE IFO MEMBERSHIP ON THIS UNATTAINABLE GOAL WOULD HAVE MEANT THEIR EXCLUSION FROM THE SHAPING OF THE COMPROMISE FISHERIES REGIME WHICH THE GOI HAD DECIDED TO SEEK.

AN ADDITIONAL SWEETNER AIMED AT BOTH LOCAL FISHERMEN AND SHIP BUILDERS WAS ANNOUNCED BY MINISTER LENIHAN ON FEBRUARY 24. HE PROMISED THAT BY MID-1978 25 PERCENT EC GRANTS AND MATCHING GOI GRANTS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF UNDER 50-FOOT TRAWLERS. SHANNON

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